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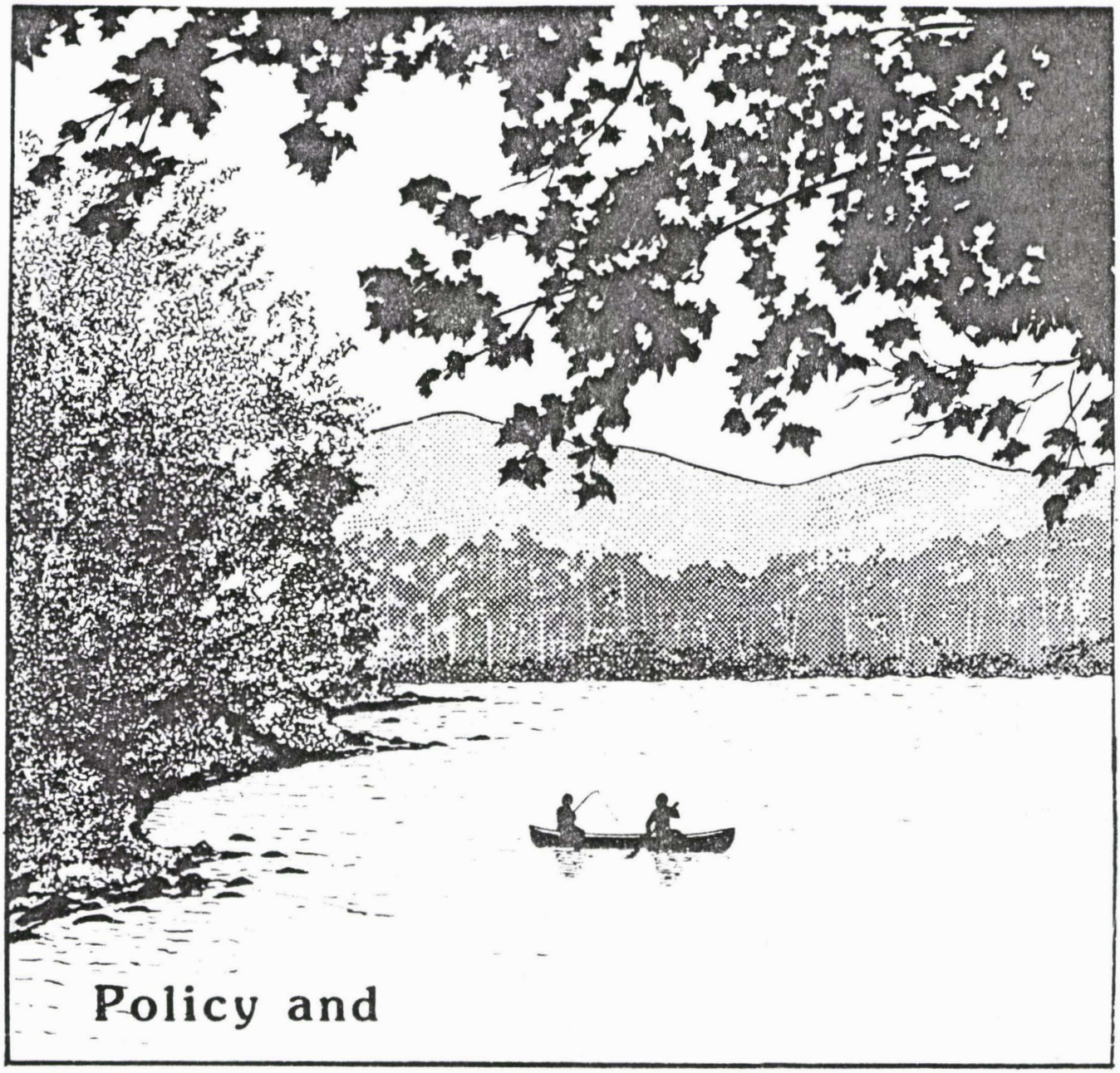

Policy and Procedure Directions for Green Mountain National Forest Recreation Management

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POLICY and PROCEDURE DIRECTIONS

GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

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I. ABSTRACT

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Title: Policy and Procedure Directions for Green Mountain National Forest Recreation Management

Abstract: This paper focuses on what the author perceives to be the primary issues and concerns in recreation management currently facing the Green Mountain National Forest. The report develops and records a philosophy for management of the recreation resource on the Forest. It embodies policies and direction for the Forest recreation program and procedures which will help translate that direction into project proposals and action plans.

Within the last ten years, emphasis in recreation management on Green Mountain National Forest has been focused on coordinating multiple use direction for Land Management Planning. During the same period, annual budget allotments did not keep pace with inflation or with program needs; personnel limitations have forced reduced services at conventional facilities; and trends in forest recreation uses have changed.

This report re-examines the whole recreation program and sets out a proposed direction for managing the Forest recreation resource for the immediate future, the short term (budget) range of 3-8 years and the longer range of 8 to 15 years.

It also presents the direction for applying recreation program guidelines as developed in the Forest Plan and to bridge the gap from the level of Forest Planning to the on-the-ground application level to be dealt with in more detailed recreation Zone Plans.

It has been prepared for the use of the Forest Supervisor in directing the recreation management program on the Green Mountain National Forest. It is also for the District Rangers in managing the recreation resource and for those planners who will write the next level of recreation resource management guides under the umbrella of the Forest Land Management Plan.

II. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Our Land Management Planning process on the Green Mountain National Forest involves a number of background papers for use as appendices to the Plan. Those papers document what we have done and why, or deal with special aspects of the plan umbrella.

This report is intended to be an appendix to the Forest Plan and bridges the gap from Forest level planning in LMP to specific on-site tasks which will be covered in Zone Plans.

This report is written to show how the Green Mountain National Forest fits into current overall recreation trends, then to incorporate direction from the Forest Service national level, regional items specific to the Green Mountain, State input and concerns raised by Forest personnel.

The point of this report is to provide objectives, direction and policy for the next 15 years, and with further expansion into Zone Planning, to yield goals and action or implementation plans.

When sorted into one place, three things become apparent:

1. Current developed recreation facilities on the Forest generally are in line with the recreation opportunity the Forest seeks to provide.

2. No new major recreation developed sites should be built during the next 15 years.

3. No new trails are needed except as may be determined in zone planning to create loops or innovative hiker opportunities, or to expand and strengthen a multipurpose trail network.

III. INTRODUCTION

Vermont is a recreation State and the Green Mountain National Forest is a valuable of that resource. The District in New York is small as Ranger Districts go, but still contributes to the total recreation picture of that area of the State.

The National Forest in Vermont is situated along the spine of the Green Mountain range in the south central part of the State, encompassing 295,000 acres of high mountains and rolling foothills.

The 13,000 acre Hector Ranger District is located in the Finger Lakes area of upstate New York on the so-called Hector backbone, a low ridge which lies between the southerly end of Seneca and Cayuga Lakes.

The whole Forest, both in Vermont and New York, is noted for specific rural attractiveness, as well as for demonstration aspects of multiple use of a managed forest environment.

The Green Mountain National Forest is a nice woods, with several attractors of a nationwide nature including a National Recreation Area, a National Scenic Trail (segment) and six Wildernesses. It contributes to the annual foliage spectacular, and supports major downhill and cross country skiing opportunities as well as such popular dispersed uses as hunting and hiking. The Forest is essentially homogenous with a multitude of recreation opportunities available.

The sometime elusiveness of pursuing the public recreation attitude, reflecting changes in habits, tastes and mores needs to be focused into an updated look at the Forest, and how it can meet recreation needs and desires in the decades of the 80's and 90's.

It is essential to sort and prioritize what the Forest can and will do to meet outdoor recreation needs under the control of National, Regional and Forest policies and action plans.

Instead of creating new data, the object of this report is to bring together pertinent data from a wide band of sources to provide a supporting framework for Forest policies, and to direct Forest recreation management over the next 15-16 years.

This report will support the Forest Land Management Plan and provide coordinating direction to Zone Plans.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the study is to bring together the various guidance for managing the Forest recreation resource from nationwide indicators of trends and uses, Forest Service advice from the Washington Office and Regional Office levels, State expectations on the perceived role of the Forest in Vermont, and finally, opinions, ideas, suggestions, proposals and plans put forth by the on-the-ground managers of the Green Mountain National Forest itself.

This guidance, tempered by what the Forest and the Forest Service can do in providing for recreation uses on the National Forest, legally, socially and economically, sets the stage for an evaluation of specific objectives, policies and direction for recreation management.

Once accepted, the natural sequence will be to prepare goals and implementation strategies for translating direction into specific, meaningful action.

An initial overview of the various references and resource materials available seemed to indicate that while National, Regional and Forest recreation management philosophies were all pointing in the same direction with general agreement, there also seemed to be a lack of cohesiveness or clarity in stating exactly how the recreation resource should be addressed on the Green Mountain National Forest.

It is clearly the responsibility of the Forest managers to state the direction for recreation management on the Forest, within prescribed limits, and not the job of the Regional Office or Washington Office levels.

This report is a distillation of various reference material for facts pertinent to the Green Mountain National Forest and its recreation resource opportunities, analysis of how those facts can ultimately guide recreation management to yield desired results, and the specific Forest guidelines designed to achieve those results.

IV. DELIMITATIONS

a. No attempt has been made to evaluate the perceived role of the Green Mountain National Forest in light of the White Mountain National Forest to the east and the Adirondack Forest Preserve to the west. While there may be important aspects of this situation, they are beyond the scope of this plan and their influence on Green Mountain recreation direction is assumed to be inherent in the references used.

b. Similarly, no attempt is made to picture the relationship of the Hector Ranger District to that area of New York state except by assumption to the references used. However, it is appropriate to incorporate the Hector District into the full scope of this plan and this has been done.

c. In preparing this recreation plan to meet the need as a bridge from Land Management Planning to Zone Planning, some topics important to today's managers were incorporated, lending an air of specificity but a tone of rambling to some small parts of the document. This is recognized, is intentional and deemed valuable and necessary to complete the purpose.

V. PREMISES

This plan is prepared on the assumption that a reasonably financed degree of management of the Forest recreation resource will continue, and that the level of this management will be sufficient to support a broad range of user opportunities.

VI. LIMITATIONS

a. The report ends with a brief treatise on long-range program development as a sub heading of the Direction chapter. A logical step beyond that is the development of specific project goals and action plans. These are beyond the scope and timing of this plan.

b. Reviewers have suggested that many statements in the Objectives and Policy chapters are "too motherhood" and could-would apply to many if not all National Forests. This is precisely true and rightly so when they are built upon direction from the Forest Service Washington Office and Region 9 Regional office. Such statements also need to be refined from the letters, memoranda, etc., where they appear and be incorporated into a document of ready and reasonably durable reference.

c. This plan represents Forest direction for management of the recreation resource, therefore alternatives within management have been weighed in other arenas and are not considered appropriate or useful here.

VII. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature research began with the assumption that not much recreation material existed for the Green Mountain National Forest. There were, of course, earlier National Forest recreation plans, current work in Forest Land Management Planning and other specific Forest plans, to which reference is made.

However, expanding the research into the general recreation philosophy topic, there were National level publications pertinent to the Forest situation available although somewhat limited.

This paper relies most on the pertinent materials, at the same time using general source documents to good advantage.

A great many more references were reviewed which only contributed peripherally to the primary topic. Some are listed in the Bibliography because of their direct bearing on the shaping of the subject report.

All references were employed primarily to ascertain that report direction was not in conflict with established National guidance or apparent trends. Key references supporting this report tended to be very local and very specific.

Finally, as a reference source, the author interviewed and listened to National Forest experts in the field, the local District Rangers and

recreation specialists who deal with recreation aspects every day "in the trenches" and "front lines" of management.

VIII. ANALYSIS

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Management of the recreation resource on the Green Mountain National Forest is guided by laws, regulations and orders as well as National, Regional and Local policy, direction and guidelines. Within that spectrum, however, there is ample room for the recognition of public needs and desires evidenced by trends established by use.

The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC, circa 1960) functioned as a focal point to bring together much recreation information gathered to that time and to translate this information into action.

Three major findings were expressed in the ORRRC reports.

- Outdoor recreation opportunities are most urgently needed near metropolitan areas.

- Although considerable public land was available for outdoor recreation, it did not effectively meet the public need because much of it was not easily accessible to major population centers.

- Additional funding was required at federal, state and local levels to meet needs.

Each of these ORRRC findings was carefully addressed and each was met in some measure. However, no single one was completely discharged, and all three remain today with some degree of viability.

Among the accomplishments of the ORRRC direction was the recommendation and establishment of national systems of wild, scenic and recreation rivers, wilderness and trails. The affect of this collective action still lingers with us today as we debate potential additions to each system, both nationwide and on the Green Mountain National Forest.

Four distinct themes have emerged since ORRRC as expressed by the 1983 report from the Outdoor Recreation Policy Review Group.

- Demographic changes have created new demands for outdoor recreation programs and resources, both in place and in kind.

- In light of new economic realities, we have a growing recognition of the limits of government and what government can provide.

- As a result of values developed during the 1970's, the leisure ethic has become established in American life.

- A growing trend toward regionalization and decentralization requires increased attention to regional, state and substate conditions in national policy making and planning.

There is also the two-fold affect of the bounty of American life, i.e., the increase in leisure which results from a shortening workweek and the increase in disposable income or income which is available to spend on leisure pursuits (Hof and Kaiser, 1983). The increase in the number of two-income families is representative of this latter condition.

Coupled with that, is the reality of an older population which is expected to opt for less strenuous activities and the general effect of rising energy costs (Hof & Kaiser, 1983). However, the effect of this on user trends, although being felt nationwide, was not readily apparent in local uses in 1983, according to Forest information, and hasn't been apparent for the last 10 years.

By most measures, participation in outdoor recreation has outpaced projections. This dramatic growth can be expected to continue in the next 50 years in all outdoor recreation but especially in water related and snow and ice related activities (American Recreation Coalition [ARC], 1983; Hof & Kaiser, 1983). Downhill and cross country uses show the most potential increase, while snowmobiling shows a smaller percentage increase but still an increase (Hof & Kaiser, 1983). Outdoor recreation demands can be expected to continue to increase on a static or in some cases decreasing land base. Specific use demands change as is seen in the dramatic downturn and then leveling off of snowmobile use on the Forest and the introduction of 3 and 4-wheel, all-season ORV's (off-road vehicles). However, demand for various experience levels remains constant, directing management towards experiences and not specific uses (Forest Recreation Information Management Data, RIM).

Recreation use projections for the Forest, either assigned or internally calculated, have been consistently higher than use. The increase in local government and private facilities has tended to reduce the impact on Forest recreation use (Forest Land Management Planning, LMP, 1984).

Recreation participation has also outpaced population increases. The evolution of new recreation forms is dramatically expanding the recreation participation base (ARC, 1983). New kinds of recreation activity and increased use have resulted in conflict between recreation users; these conflicts could be mitigated or eliminated with improved planning and management (ORRRC).

Throughout all this, there is evidence that the recreation mix is changing. Some uses are declining or simply not increasing as rapidly while others are going up dramatically (Cordell, 1983).

Nationwide there appears to be several actions which tend to reduce the private land base available to supplement public holdings. There is a trend toward more posting as possessory interests and liability concerns become paramount. There is an evident swing toward more lease type uses of private land for exclusive use, and of course, the ever present conversion of private rural land to smaller, individual ownerships for urban and residential use (Cordell, 1983).

As might be expected with some recreation uses, the density of participation appears to be very sensitive to the availability of recreation facilities. Downhill skiing and camping, for example, demonstrate the

relatively high sensitivity to supply availability which sightseeing and ORV use represent a low sensitivity to available supply and are therefore not severely constrained by scarce opportunities for participation (Hof & Kaiser, 1983).

The availability of recreation facilities appears to be quite important in determining participation especially in those activities that require specialized facilities. This implies that provision of additional recreation opportunities will result in increased participation. However, other studies show that National Forest campgrounds without specific attractors receive low use and short-term use. It does not therefore follow that simply building additional facilities will create new use (Hof & Kaiser, 1983). However, the demand remains steady for various experience levels.

In its report, the Outdoor Recreation Policy Review Group identified five policy issues for further study:

- government responsibilities for outdoor recreation
- the role of the private sector
- federal funding for outdoor recreation
- non-funding federal assistance (data collection, planning and technical assistance)
- federal land and national management systems

These issues seem to have a common thread which binds them together - what are the roles of the public and private sectors in outdoor recreation?

Unlike most other industries, where the role of the government is limited to regulation and administration, the various governments serve as direct providers of recreation services to the public, sometimes in direct competition with the private sector as with campgrounds (ARC, 1983). This situation is being seriously challenged by private industry.

Actually, the role of the two sectors in recreation can be symbiotic. Unilateral actions by government directly affect the private sector. Outdoor recreation in America has changed dramatically, yet the public sector recreation programs are still being guided by policies and thinking developed in 1960 (ARC, 1983). Is the private sector taking up the slack if the Federal government is not meeting recreation needs? (Cordell, 1983).

A significant portion of the public recreation estate is underused and could accommodate increased use with: 1) better planning, 2) some increased investment, and 3) advertising availability. The role of the federal government needs to be reassessed, redefined and revived. Faster innovation and experimentation is needed in more effective ways to broaden the recreation opportunities (ORRRC).

It seems worthwhile to recognize another concern at this point. Several different kinds of professionals make direct on-the-ground decisions

about forest management. These include foresters, wildlife biologists and forest managers. However, these professionals seem to suffer from low public profile and conflicting self definition. Concerns are that anyone can call himself-herself a forester, that foresters are often perceived as insensitive and uninformed on non-timber aspects of forests, that forestry is not adequately explained to the public and that the public does not understand the different roles of forest professionals. These individuals are called upon daily to make forest management decisions which directly affect the recreation resources of our nation's forests and will benefit from a common perception of purpose (NYS Environment, 1983).

Another aspect to deal with is the never-enough funding situation. There are ways in which outdoor recreation could be provided to meet increased demands which would not require huge public expenditures. For example, with good land management planning and coordination among government and the private sector, public recreation land could be used more intensively without lowering the quality of the resource or the experiences. Conversely, it seems that good planning can insure adequate protection of the natural resources and the environment so necessary to a quality recreation experience (ORRRC).

Nationwide, and as far as the Green Mountain National Forest is concerned, there is a lack of information on the nation's basic outdoor recreation resources (ORRRC). For example, more dissemination of information on recreation uses of wilderness is needed (Scheller, 1980).

While much has been accomplished in acquisition of critical lands needed for recreation programs, much still needs to be done. It is essential to complete the highest priority recreation land purchase needs to round out available resource and use opportunities (ORRRC).

There is an expanding role for the volunteer and those non-profit organizations, both of which can contribute a great deal to federal recreation programs as funding support diminishes (ORRRC). This extends to the profit-oriented sector using the National Forest as part of their operations.

In presenting a balanced recreation program, the Green Mountain National Forest needs to respond to the points expressed above and hopefully within the five policy issue areas identified by the Outdoor Recreation Policy Review Group.

With these overview comments in mind, it seems appropriate to scope the recreation guidance for the Green Mountain National Forest through descending levels of control and coordination.

FOREST SERVICE NATIONAL DIRECTION

It is not necessary to repeat all National recreation policy and direction, but it is important to stress particular items originating at the Washington level which pertain or apply to the Green Mountain National Forest.

The national goal statement for recreation, taken from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement prepared for the 1985 update of the Forest Service report in response to the Resources Planning Act, follows. This is intended to be guidance for at least the next five years:

> Provide outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences by providing access, services, and facilities, where cost effective, that are necessary to meet the National Forest system share of the nation's demand for outdoor recreation, consistent with other resource uses and values. Provide technology to improve and extend recreation opportunities. Move toward recreation users assuming a greater share of the cost of providing recreation opportunities.

The Forest Service is continuing efforts to bring campground fees to a point where fee collections offset most of the cost to operate such sites. In such an effort, the objective is to eliminate the appearance of competition with the private sector. In order to accomplish this, new legislative authorizations are needed to charge fees at campgrounds that

are currently free and to charge appropriate fees for other services and facilities provided (Peterson, 1983; LMP, 1984).

The National Campground Owners Association has expressed agreement with a policy that would raise campground fees to reduce subsidized competition with the private sector. Cost effective National Forest Campgrounds should be a value to both the agency and the private sector (Verhoven, 1983).

More than that, however, is the expressed policy of the Chief that the Forest Service should provide developed recreation facilities that are more toward the primitive end of the recreation opportunity spectrum and rely on the private sector to compliment those with more highly developed facilities (Peterson, 1983, 1984).

Here again, the National Campground Owners Association expressed full support, indicating that they were pleased with the Forest Service policy which would have the effect of encouraging the private sector to provide the more highly developed facilities which have a better profit potential. The private sector is entirely capable of furnishing camping facilities which would compliment National Forest programs (Verhoven, 1983).

This is an expression of the partnership concept between the Forest Service and the private sector (Verhoven, 1983). The Forest Service should provide what it can do best and concentrate on recreational opportunities that the private sector is not capable of providing. A prime example is a large land base for recreation opportunities at the

primitive and semi-primitive end of the spectrum. The Forest Service is working with private enterprise by providing the land base and letting private investors take the risk and promote use (i.e. - outfitter guides, cross country skiing, etc.).

Forest Service policies aim at maximizing recreation opportunities while minimizing conflicts with other resource uses and other users (WO Letter, 1983).

In order to do this, the aim is for cooperation with the recreation user. Heavy-handed regulations which restrict user freedom and enjoyment and detract from the general recreation experience are only valid as a last resort. The Forest Service will follow a course of monitoring uses, user needs, use trends and resource impacts, legislation, techniques of management and the educational efforts of the industries (for example - A.T.V.'s etc.) to instill an environmental ethic to the users. Keeping in touch with users enables a more direct opportunity to discuss potential conflicts and new ideas in a more logical, informed and cooperative problem-solving way (WO Letter, 1983).

With regard to wilderness, the expressed policy is that wilderness management should be quite conservative. Time spent on information and education programs is better than imposing special restrictions on wilderness use. The theme of maintaining what we have drives the management program. The objective is to devise some very minimal management principles which are faithful to the Wilderness Act and continue to perpetuate naturalness (Peterson, 1983).

The Vermont Wilderness Act of 1984, Public Law 98-322, established four new wildernesses in the Green Mountain National Forest, as well as enlarging an existing wilderness and creating a National Recreation Area. Specific guidance in the law permits the Appalachian and Long Trails and their related structures within established wilderness to be maintained as they are at present.

Direction for managing the National Recreation Area indicates four key points:

1. Continue existing primitive and semi-primitive recreation use in a natural environment;

2. Timber may be cut only to maintain existing wildlife habitat and recreation uses;

3. Preserve the wild forest and aquatic habitat for fish and wildlife;

4. Protect special areas.

REGIONAL DIRECTION

Within the recent past, direction regarding Forest recreation programs has been expressed in correspondence and Management Review reports. As the scoping process narrows to a more specific focus on the Forest, management guidance also becomes more specific. Within the context of the Overview and National Direction chapters, this Regional guidance takes on a more complete significance.

As observed by visitors from the Regional Office, the Green Mountain National Forest recognizes and abides by a definitely stated recreation role, and this position is acknowledged by all Forest personnel. The Forest's role is essentially providing recreation opportunities of a dispersed nature emphasizing primarily primitive and semi-primitive conditions (Hagemeier, 1983).

Recreation is a people-centered activity that may not fit neatly into the economic maximization models of commodity/market emphasis. Still, it should be as cost effective as possible (Hronek, 1983).

Recreation aspects include social and emotional values which are sometimes hard to discern and harder still to measure economically. Outdoor recreation aspects are still more difficult to validate. It is hard to place a value on such things as aesthetics, "wilderness experience", exhilaration of being in the woods, values of vistas, smells, wild flowers, observing birds and small animals and clear water. Setting an economic value on the cultural resources which exist in many forest

areas, such as historical evidence of past habitation and use is mind boggling (Hronek, 1983). Suffice it to say that the visual and intrinsic values of the Green Mountain National Forest are high. Richness is found in the arrangement of views and details of the landscape (Durham, 1983). The recreation opportunity spectrum, visual quality objectives and vegetative management effort are ways to measure and deal with this variety of valuable recreation aspects (Hronek, 1983).

Developed sites should be managed with a specific purpose or theme in mind, striving to maintain the present quality of existing facilities and protect the public investment. New areas should not be built until existing facilities are rehabilitated and all recreation areas are properly maintained. However, it is possible that it is not politically feasible or wise in some situations to avoid new construction (Hronek, 1983).

Recreational vehicle use presents unique management concerns. Many of these uses are relatively new and some have only developed in the last 20 years. The use of Forest roads and trails for recreational vehicle travel is a recreation value and must be dealt with as such. Closures or other restrictions will be imposed only if the problem is of a magnitude that cannot be tolerated and the unit is willing to pay the cost of enforcement in time and dollars (FSM 5353-1, R.O. Supp. 40 [3/82]). Involved is the specific decision to create and-or maintain a desired experience level, and then enforce that decision.

Incorporation of area and road and trail recreation activities should consider:

a. ability of the Forest environment to accommodate various vehicle uses;
b. allocation of recreation opportunity spectrum classes;
c. need for partial or full closure of areas, roads or trails to public recreation use;
d. need for closure to certain classes of vehicles or activities
e. conflict with other users or uses.

The Green Mountain National Forest is an attractive Forest faced with a host of issues focused on a relatively small and highly visible public land base (Small, 1983). It is small as National Forests go, with a potential annual yield of 30 million board feet of timber products. It is within the northeast corridor and includes some of its most scenic country. It is also a small part of the total forest land in the United States that has the potential to grow quality northern hardwoods (TM Program Review, 1983).

Main travel routes through the Forest carry heavy loads of tourists. Much of the Forest area is highly visible from these routes (TM Program Review, 1983).

Much land within the Forest boundary and adjacent to National Forest is being subdivided into expensive recreation and year-round homes. People living with the Forest area, both older residents and newcomers, are taking a much more active interest in how the Forest is being managed. Their concerns are almost universally recreation oriented (TM Program Review, 1983).

Regionally, the Green Mountain timber resource is very important, both to the timber industry and for its contribution to the visual landscape. These trees and stands are visually pleasing and impressive as well as commercially valuable (TM Program Review, 1983).

The Forest timber program achieves the composition density so essential to visual management as well as wildlife management. This is a demonstration role which the Forest can and does provide, showing the multiple use effects of good integrated management practices. This is educational in many respects, but is also a function of public information and is a recreation resource (TM Program Review, 1983).

STATE COORDINATION

Vermont is a recreation state. The industry started in the 1800's with a proliferation of destination resorts on lakes and mountain tops and in woodland settings. Many of these resorts were once located within the boundaries of the present-day Green Mountain National Forest. Now tourism and recreation rival the dairy and timber industries in total annual generated income (Ski Area Development Panels VNRC-VLS 6th Annual Conference, Bolton Valley, Vermont, 1983).

The current State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is the major document for coordinating Forest Service activities with State direction. Primary SCORP objectives 1983-1988 include direction to improve and enhance recreation management in the state and continue with natural resource conservation efforts. Of the various policies expressed in the plan, two appear to be directly amenable to Forest Service coordination, namely:

> Policy 4 - Intergovernmental Cooperation: It will be State Policy to assist and encourage intermunicipal, regional and intergovernmental opportunities.
>
> Policy 10 - Quality of Recreation: It will be the policy of the State of Vermont to continue the tradition of emphasizing the quality of recreation development as a primary concern in public management rather than the quantity of development.

Further, three SCORP issues also lend well to Forest Service cooperation. These issues revolve around the availability of dispersed recreation opportunities which are perceived to be decreasing because of access problems, posting and closures.

Issues include:

- availability of open space for dispersed use opportunities
- scenery protection
- providing and maintaining trail networks

Scenery protection is difficult to deal with for many reasons. Very often the area being viewed is owned by other than the public, and perhaps by several owners. It may be extensive and in many cases may even be in another state. Determination of view quality is subjective and debatable. Mitigating measures are expensive and sometimes infeasible. Sometimes viewshed protection is not seen as a necessity in public programs (SCORP).

The Vermont trail network is one of the primary single recreation attractors in statewide recreation opportunities. Use is increasing, and some trails are overused. Subdivisions are crowding in on trail corridors, conflicts between users exist and needs of special populations are not met (SCORP).

Clearly, trails and trail networks are of paramount importance in the National Forest as well as the State recreation complex. A recent study

of "The Quality and Use of Vermont's Hiking Trail System" (Lindsay, 1983) exposed some important information. Backcountry use in the eastern National Parks has tripled since 1967. Over 28% of the U.S. population indulges in hiking and-or backpacking as a recreation pursuit. One out of four northeast residents participates in hiking activities and 17% of Vermont's population hike at least once per year (SCORP).

A large portion of the Vermont trail network is concentrated in the Green Mountains. Major areas of the state - the Northeast Kingdom and the Connecticut River Valley - have very few trails. Whatever trail opportunities that might exist in these areas simply have not been developed.

The Green Mountains, including the National Forest area, encompass the Long Trail-Appalachian Trail system and attract many out-of-state hikers as well as offering Vermont residents unique outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Appalachian Trail-Long Trail system with associated side trails and related facilities is the predominant trail system on the Forest and within the state.

Hiker impacts on each other and on the environment are increasing. Most hikers seek a clean, natural, uncrowded environment where they can enjoy plants, animals and scenic vistas normally associated with backcountry hiking (SCORP).

Generally, there are perceived to be enough hiking trails and no more major trails need to be developed. One weak area, however, is the need for loop trails, defined for day use as 5 miles or less of trail, with a common start and end point. Longer loops are needed for overnight use. However, these appear to be least used and there should be a clear need before new ones are built. Simple connectors might improve networks at little added expense (SCORP).

There is a need to develop more multi-use trail systems (i.e. horse/snowmobile) to increase use, respond to more needs and provide a bigger group base to assist with maintenance. User control can be effected through limiting the size of groups at overnight spots and stationing caretaker attendants at heavily used sites to enforce regulations and rehabilitate campsites. User fees at overnight spots are acceptable but there is clear evidence that trail use fees, hiking licenses, daily quotas and/or permit systems should be only used as a last resort. Control of use can also be achieved by offering increased trail mileage.

Dispersed camping along trail routes (within 200 feet of the trail) seems to be as acceptable as adding new shelters although new facilities may be needed at heavily used areas.

Development of ski areas in Vermont evolved from family supported ventures to full-fledged corporate business operations run on a year-round basis (VNRC-VLS 6th Annual Conference, 1983).

While downhill skiing is properly an outdoor recreation activity, and nationwide use figures project major increases in users in the future, the role of the public agencies is more limited to regulation and coordination. Still, some opportunities to expand areas exist and must be recognized as part of the Forest recreation offering - they are part of the Forest recreation experience.

The Forest Service can offer assistance to a great many of the SCORP Action Plan recommendations through a formal Vermont recreation planning network. Several specific recommendations are directly supportable by the Forest Service and represent coordination opportunities. These are among actions SCORP recommends to the Forest Service:

- Continue to maintain the current level of recreation opportunities available; continued attention should be given to the maintenance and creation of semi-primitive and primitive dispersed opportunities.

- Continue the management strategy of considering recreation as an element of all management decision making.

- Coordinate with towns within the purchase boundary in providing recreation opportunities.

- Assist the Agency of Transportation to continue to maintain and provide roadside and turn-off areas for recreation

opportunities provided and valuable contributions to dispersed recreation opportunities.

- Work with the Agency of Environmental Conservation planning to develop and promote a linking multi-purpose trail network. Programs should emphasize cooperation between federal, state, regional, local and private groups, using existing systems wherever possible and attempting to meet year-round use needs.

- Facilitate Agency of Environmental Conservation cooperation and coordination in management and protection of Forest Service wilderness with particular attention to equitable access.

- Assist the Vermont Fish and Game Department to acquire public waterway access especially on the White River for the Atlantic Salmon reintroduction program.

FOREST AND LOCAL INPUT

Writer Ted Williams, in an article entitled "Farewell to a Forest", written in response to the prospect of oil and gas leasing on the Green Mountain National Forest, describes the Forest rather eloquently. He precedes his description with recognition of Vermont's position: "Vermont has been called the most beautiful eastern state, and is probably the most environmentally progressive." It contains "such environmental sensitive public real estate as the Green Mountain National Forest, a 292,000 acre oasis in the southern half of the state, into which is packed a great deal of Vermont's legendary beauty." He then goes on to describe the Forest:

> The Forest accounts for only about four percent of the state, and yet these wild and diverse woods, with their lush hardwood valleys and rugged fir-clad peaks, their stone walls and quiet ponds, their lynx, bobcat, black bear, pine marten, osprey, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and all the other good things Americans keep learning to live without, are within a day's drive of 43 million people. Population density in New England averages 340 souls per square mile, compared with the national average of 58. Nowhere does the public have greater need and less opportunity to lose itself in big, wild, unposted, unmolested woods.
>
> If I could spend a season there, it would be autumn. This is the time in the Green Mountains when everything seems to be happening at once and the best elements of the year converge. The brook trout, New England's lovely native char, are in their

spawning colors, the males brighter than the swamp maples that ring their secret pools. The young grouse are feathered out, off on their own and into the jewelweed. The deer are fat and into the acorns. Wild turkeys, which now abound in the Green Mountain National Forest, thanks to the progressive management of the Fish and Game Department, move like ghosts through the big hardwoods and banter among the hilltops. Woodcock waft down from Quebec and the maritimes under the hunter moon and flutter like oak leaves into alder runs at dawn. The air is fragrant with apple, grape and wood smoke.

This forest, unlike a great deal of New England's north woods, is almost infinite in its variety. Even in winter one rarely feels the chill that sometimes descends on the spirit when one trudges too far and too long into the monotonous backgrowth of Maine and Canada. It is a wild forest, but a warm and friendly one, too. There are sunny meadows strewn with wild flowers three seasons of the year; rolling farmland forever changing from white to brown to green to gold; old growth and new growth; cedar swamps and pond-lily swamps; clear, rushing brooks and quiet, coiling beaver flowages. It is New England the way it used to be.

Writer Williams words recall an earlier description of Vermont excerpted from the poem "No Vermonters in Heaven" by E. F. Johnstone (1915), a resident of the National Forest area:

They tell of ravines, wild, secluded and deep,
and flower decked landscapes serene

Of towering mountains, imposing and steep,
Adown which the torrents exultingly leap,
Through forests perennially green

The Green Mountain range which the Forest straddles is recognized as the overriding and primary topographical feature of the state. Historically, the Green Mountain range dictated much of man's history in Vermont. The mountains provided timber, minerals, wild game, water and recreation. This range has also acted as an obstacle, distinctly separating the east side of the state from the west and dividing some towns. The mountains also helped build "the solid character of the people who chose to defy the barrier" (Historian W. Storrs Lee as quoted in a draft "History of the Green Mountain National Forest" by John Douglas in fulfillment of his graduate thesis).

Along with several nationally known and recognized recreation attractors, the Forest itself is an attractor, as varied as one would seem to want. The Green Mountain National Forest is a nice woods.

This definition is enlarged upon by Alan Gussow in an article written for the November-December, 1983 issue of Appalachian Trailway News. Writer Gussow described a situation in New York State regarding the proposed construction of a major powerline. His description applies not only to the Hector District but also to the Green Mountain National Forest as a whole. Mr. Gussow's article "A Sense of Place, Making a Case for Feminine Landscapes" questions the pervading outlook to consider beautiful only those landscapes which possess what might be

called macho characteristics - rugged mountains, thrusting rock formations and deep frothing cascades - while finding little value in softer scenes - gentle slopes, meandering streams and bucolic pastoral settings.

His description of this certain area of New York State, again applicable to the Green Mountains, Vermont and much of New England and the northeast, seems to reinforce a value of the Green Mountain National Forest as a nice woods.

> The landscape is dappled, lacking high drama or geological uniqueness, yet containing features which are both picturesque and scenic. There are no equivalents to Yosemite or the Grand Tetons, no plunging wild canyons or soaring headlands. The landscape is evocative, sweetly sentimental, seductive and inviting, one that is inhabited, known, cultivated, traversed, experienced, not remote or alien. It is made up of such picturesque and often scenic landscapes which feature gentle sloping, undulating terraces, narrow streams and creeks, small farm ponds, forest tracts separated by agricultural uses and hedgerows. Surely there is much we would describe as beautiful.

It is this characteristic that attracts visitors and recreationists to the Forest area.

The Green Mountain National Forest is the nearest National Forest to the eastern megalopolis dubbed Boswash in an article which appeared in the

October 3, 1983 issue of U.S. News and World Report. This industrialized area, extending from the Washington, DC north to Vermont, New Hampshire and southern Maine, from Boston on the east to well into Pennsylvania on the west contains a population of 41,786,061 (1980). It abuts upstate New York megalopolis at Albany and the urban sprawl east of Pittsburgh. It is conservatively estimated that 50 million people live within a day's drive of the Green Mountain National Forest and when the accessibility of nearby Canada is included, the total number is higher.

There is easy access to the National Forest via interstate highways linking Vermont and other New England states and population centers as well as much of eastern Canada. Much of the National Forest's unique quality results from its undeveloped and unpopulated character in relation to these nearby urban centers. It also provides some of the most undeveloped and unpopulated public land in large blocks within Vermont (LMP, 1984).

Recreation aspects are thoroughly intertwined with all other Forest uses and the management of the land needs to recognize and consider this. The Forest provides a variety of recreation opportunities requiring various degrees of solitude and a relatively natural environment. Demands exist for recreation activities associated with easy road access. These demands are met in part by private or other public. The extent of the National Forest role in meeting these demands must be clarified as well (LMP, 1984).

In actuality, the basic reason to do wildlife habitat management is as much for recreation purposes as to benefit wildlife. Timber management (vegetative management) also has primary recreation objectives. Some vegetative management programs - most notably firewood gathering and Christmas tree cutting are as much recreation oriented as for the economic base.

The Green Mountain National Forest has:

- 8 campgrounds, including one at Hector, with 145 units
- approximately 40 dispersed campsites
- 1 reservations only group campground (Hector)
- 14 picnic areas with a capacity of 490 persons at one time
- 60,000 acres in 6 wildernesses
- a 36,000 acre National Recreation Area
- 600 miles of trails (including part of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail) which equals 40% of the formally designated trail mileage in Vermont and 25 miles on the Hector Ranger District in New York
- 5 alpine ski areas
- 11 nordic ski areas
- 80 miles of marked cross country ski trails

Forest recreation use figures for 1981 show 610,000 recreation visitor days (RVD). User fees collected at developed sites totaled $11,950, while ski area permittees paid $193,000 for uses located on National Forest (Schumann, 1983).

In the report "An Evaluation of Outdoor Recreation Management on the Green Mountain National Forest", Manchester District Ranger, Wolfgang Schumann states that Forest trails are generally well accepted and the development level is agreed to be about right. The great majority of visitors requesting information at the Manchester Ranger's office are looking for short loop or destination trails, suitable for less experienced hikers. Most popular are destination trails to recreation attractors such as peaks and lakes.

Likewise, there is a need for information on alternate trails. The main Appalachian-Long Trail is well covered in various maps and publications.

The Forest supplies only a small portion of the developed facilities available in Vermont. There is a private or state campground within an half-hour drive of any Forest facility.

Based on occupancy rates of Forest Service and state parks, Vermont camping facilities are underutilized, and Green Mountain National Forest sites are at the low end of the scale of use. Increases in user demands are offset by increased availability of private and state facilities. In addition, the Forest provides a different experience level than State or private facilities. Demand may be lower for National Forest opportunities.

Some people prefer the less developed character of National Forest facilities and these campers would object to major improvements or closures. It appears safe to state that existing National Forest facilities

cater to a special few. Campgrounds are not crowded, and construction of new facilities or major changes and improvements in existing facilities are not practical for the foreseeable future.

The draft Forest Land Management Plan and related documents include specific direction for recreation management. Early on, four primary concerns were raised to be addressed in the planning process.

- provide a spectrum of various recreation options
- control overuse and abusive recreation use
- cooperate with other public and private landowners
- consider more cross country ski trails at Hector

Components of a management plan for overall best Forest management for public benefits also provide clues as to the direction Forest recreation management should take in the next 10-20 years. A management plan should:

- be flexible
- provide a wide variety of individual choices
- provide what private land does not
- meet demands
- be ecologically sound
- be economically sound
- be acceptable to interested publics
- meet minimum requirements of law, policy direction, etc.

A listing of primary recreation attributes, benefits and opportunities available on the Green Mountain National Forest can also be gleaned from the draft Plan documents. These include:

- wildlife based recreation - big game, small game, non-game, fish
- many areas of high visual intensity
- wild and scenic river segments which display one or more key values as hydrologics, geologic, recreation, historic or fishery
- five alpine ski areas, one currently undergoing expansion and three others planning to expand in the future
- wildlife ponds at Hector
- breeder and habitat streams for the Atlantic Salmon reintroduction program
- major scenic travelway corridors criss-crossing or parallel in the Forest

In canvassing direction for management of the Forest recreation resource, several meetings and conversations were held with District Rangers and Forest recreation specialists. A distillation of their input is vital to this report.

The number one identified planning job to be tackled after the Forest Plan should be the preparation of plans for the 9 units and 83 zones. This type of planning will bridge the gap between LMP and more specific proposals that will be carried out on the ground. The boundaries of a Unit Plan area are formed by an existing transportation network.

Zones are defined as groups of timber compartments bound together by common topographic features and access. Unit and Zone plans will evaluate not only the potential and existing recreational opportunities that are available in the unit area, but also consider the recreation impact on other resources and vice versa. Recreation will be coordinated with other management activities such as timber sales and wildlife. The final results of such plans should enable the land manager to realize the potential of an area to support recreational activities.

An equally important task is the need for site plan work. At least 20 such plans are needed within the next 10 years.

There is not much opportunity for major new hiking trails or snowmobile trails, but there is both a need and an opportunity to create cross country ski trails. Multi-use trail networks and opportunities need a new, fresh examination which should be done in the Unit and Zone plans.

Access to the National Forest and the related development of trailhead facilities and parking is also needed, particularly for winter use.

In Vermont, the private sector is taking advantage of the opportunity to provide developed recreation facilities, and has done so in cooperation with the public sector. This should be continued. New developed facilities are not needed on the Green Mountain unless they accompany a major recreation attraction.

The Forest signing situation needs emphasis. Primary objectives should be:

- safety and convenience of Forest visitors and users
- National Forest identification signs
- signs providing information about recreation opportunities or National Forest management
- signs which make the Forest more available to the user

At Hector, four specific ideas were identified in a recent Cornell University study:

- emphasize low energy consumptive recreation pursuits
- provide special habitats for birds and wildlife
- stress and facilitate the unique opportunity to view (study) the inter-relationships of fields, woods and pastures
- take advantage of this very attractive unit in a rural setting for recreationists

Finally, Ranger Schumann, in his study report, recommends:

- de-emphasize construction and major improvement to developed recreation sites (The Forest has followed this direction for 10 years or more.)
- direct more dollars to improved dispersed recreation opportunities and wildlife habitat for hunting
- emphasize shorter loop trails to summits and destination points

- increase efforts to inform user groups and the general public of resource management activities and options to gain support
- be more flexible to public concerns in management practices
- modify even-aged silviculture to reflect visual concerns in sensitive areas
- emphasize continuous forest cover as a management option on significant parts of the Forest

IX. THE PLAN

GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST RECREATION PROGRAM

The preceding five chapters focus on the specific policies and direction to be used in managing the recreation resource on the Green Mountain National Forest over the next 15 years.

In reshaping the focus of the indicators in the preceding chapters into a Forest recreation program, three major categories were considered, namely objectives, policy and direction.

As used in this report, objective (as opposed to "goal") is defined as an end toward which efforts are directed; the object of endeavors or actions. Policy refers to the principle on which a measure or course of action is based; a line of conduct which is adopted on particular questions. Direction is the course or line along which a thing moves or is directed; the act of directing (Living Webster Dictionary, 1982).

It is important to manage the recreation resources of the Green Mountain National Forest in accordance with indicators gleaned from the outdoor recreation market. National, regional and statewide influences were combined with Forest-generated input in an attempt to mold a statement specific to the Forest.

The scope of this report is intended to project a course of action for the forest for the next 15 years or through the year 2000, based on objectives and policies derived from the previous discussions.

OBJECTIVES

The following are recommended objectives of the Forest recreation resource management program:

- Availability and Accessibility

  Make the Green Mountain National Forest as open and reachable for outdoor recreation pursuits as possible, providing a quality experience, while protecting the recreation resource and as far as possible meeting both output requirements and management needs for other Forest resources.

- Scenery Enhancement

  Provide a visually pleasing and attractive Forest environment satisfying to Forest recreationists and visitors, while continuing to manage all resources of the Forest for the utilization, enhancement and protection of those resources and the mutual benefit of the surrounding communities and the public as a whole. Provide protection for corridors for major travelways crossing through or paralleling the Forest. Protect and preserve rural landscapes.

mix of recreation opportunities consistent with the capabilities of
the resource to provide, having a share of benefits shared
without arbitrarily reducing to shortages and while fully
recognizing the Forest cannot be everything to everyone

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film is out of focus

- Coordination and Cooperation

Recognizing that the ability of the Federal government to meet public recreation needs is finite, continue to cooperate with state governments, local governments, other public agencies, universities, organizations, volunteer groups and the private sector to develop a total outdoor recreation opportunity spectrum providing a balanced recreation use experience, and role definition.

- Leadership

Provide leadership in demonstrating the various roles of forest professionals in managing the interrelated multiple uses associated with a forest environment.

Demonstrate the capability of a working forest to provide multiple recreation uses while meeting needs for other forest resources.

- Inform and Teach

Facilitate the opportunity for the public to learn general forest management techniques by providing a variety of information sources which explain and interpret management activities.

POLICIES

Recommended policies build on the foregoing objectives to set out the basic principles guiding management of the resource.

It is important that the Forest set policies for management of the recreation resource within the objectives outlined previously. Most of the policies followed by the Forest have been established earlier; some have been written in other plans and documents; some have never been committed to written form. Organizing priorities will help focus the direction of time and energy spent in managing the resource.

Meeting Public Recreation Needs

From a recreation standpoint, the Forest needs to continue to make the public feel welcome. Given the current trends and conditions of outdoor recreation use, additional pressure on the resources can be expected.

1. The Green Mountain National Forest will meet public recreation needs within the constraints and directions established in the Forest Land Management Plan, consistent with the ability of the environment to withstand impacts.

In meeting the terms of this policy, the intent will be to manage for recreation opportunity and not just recreation activities.

State Coordination

For more than 20 years, there has been an unwritten agreement between the managers of the Green Mountain National Forest and the representatives of the State of Vermont regarding the role of the Forest in providing coordinated recreation opportunities. This agreement, which represents a primary recreation policy of the Forest, should remain in place with no alteration. This agreement states:

2. The Green Mountain National Forest will tailor its recreation program toward dispersed uses at the primitive and semi-primitive end of the recreation spectrum. The state and private sector will provide developed sites. The Forest will provide developed uses to supplement and augment state and private programs and to compliment dispersed use opportunities on the National Forest.

This role for the Forest came about in negotiations with the state and is based on the large federal land ownership compared to state holdings and the relative lack of primary developable frontage on major bodies of water. The State of Vermont and the private sector have the advantage of the primary water-based attractors while the Forest has the advantage of a large land base encompassing peaks and ridges.

This agreement was not meant to stop the National Forest from developing quality recreation facilities where desirable to meet needs.

ROS Emphasis

In providing some developed facilities, the Forest will emphasize the more primitive types of sites to provide for this type of use.

3. The Green Mountain National Forest will not provide such amenities at developed sites which are inappropriate with a more primitive experience and which are in competition with more highly developed state and private facilities. (Hot showers, electric hookups, etc.)

The state and the private sector will be expected to provide such amenities as are desirable to meet recreation needs and round out the total outdoor recreation program offered to the public.

Developed Facilities

In discussions with Edward Koeneman, Director of State Parks, Mr. Koeneman supported Ranger Schumann's findings on new campground needs. Current use figures and future projections for public campgrounds in Vermont and especially within the Green Mountain National Forest do not indicate development of additional new facilities are needed or feasible particularly within the next 15 years.

Of the approximately 9,000 camp units in Vermont, distributed as 6,000 private, 2,200 state, 250 Corps of Engineers and 100 Forest Service, the occupancy ratio averages approximately 46%. There is no special demand

for new public owned campgrounds nor are there indications new use would develop.

The extent of work needed to develop major recreation facilities at the best locations within the Forest, namely at primary water based areas, and the lack of indicated demand, precludes investment of time, dollars and manpower on new site work for the foreseeable future.

This situation spawns several policies.

4. The Green Mountain National Forest will build no new major campgrounds with the possible exception of developments at Grout Pond. Grout Pond is a major water based area already receiving heavy public use with limited facilities in place.

5. No new swimming sites or boat access facilities will be built, with the exception of Grout Pond and access sites on the White River in coordination with the State of Vermont, if plans warrant.

Trails

At the same time, studies show that new trail construction should be de-emphasized and limited to only those specifically identified uses or conflict resolution opportunities which might arise.

The Forest needs to consider establishment of trail routes for various types of users to minimize conflict and meet the specific needs of those user groups and the standards and criteria required for such uses. Consideration of alternate trail routes will be a major focal point of transportation networks in Zone plans. When possible, new demands will be met with existing facilities.

However, one aspect of the overall trail program which should be addressed is hiking trails.

6. The Green Mountain National Forest will build no new major hiking trails with the exception of connector segments or short lengths to establish hiking loops to desirable attractors such as streams, peaks and ponds to create innovative loop opportunities.

Accessibility

The question of access provided by trails and transportation systems is an important one. The Forest needs to be open and available for public recreation uses. Access to and into the National Forest should be provided within the recreation opportunity spectrum standards, recognizing the need to have a somewhat higher standard of road to get to the Forest, and then lower road standards within the Forest for interior access. At any rate, the public is entitled to reasonable access to public land.

7. The Green Mountain National Forest will provide open and unrestricted public access which the visitor can utilize unhindered and without a feeling of intimidation. There should be no question or concern of interference by adjacent landowners, other users, etc.

Land Needs

Access concerns are coupled with the very real need to acquire additional lands for the National Forest to meet user needs. The Green Mountain National Forest is not complete in terms of land ownership. This is more true from the standpoint of recreation than from any other resource. Additional tracts are needed to round out the dispersed use base.

Acquisition programs are adequately directed in other Forest Service documents. However, the Forest policy needs to be restated.

8. The Green Mountain National Forest will continue the effort to acquire desirable tracts for National Forest purposes, concentrating efforts on those parcels which will meet recreation objectives and goals and enable the Forest to redeem its role in providing dispersed recreation uses.

Visual Resources

The role of recreation in other Forest resource uses cannot be overplayed. Because of the high visual intensity of the Forest,

management of activities needs to protect and enhance the visual resource of the Forest and its environment. Vegetative management activities are the primary effort to manipulate the visual resource to achieve a well-tended and obviously well-managed appearance.

9. Recreation aspects will be considered in all resource management programs and decision making processes. Recreation specialists will be involved in planning all projects having a high impact on visual resources.

Public Information and Education

In providing a visually pleasing and apparently well-managed landscape, the Forest can go one step further. It can teach the public about the task of managing a working forest by demonstrating forest management techniques. Primary to this role is making the Forest available for use by colleges and universities for study purposes.

10. The Green Mountain National Forest will be available for demonstration and/or study purposes to enable students, the general public and other interested groups or individuals to learn about forest management techniques by observing practical application in the field.

The approach must be subtle. There should be no blatant presentation of the Forest as a public education classroom, but rather a subdued availability of exactly that through public information programs.

Coordination and Cooperation

Lastly, but by no means a subordinate position, is the aspect of coordination and cooperation with others.

11. The Green Mountain National Forest will coordinate recreation efforts with the State of Vermont and other public agencies and the private sector to insure that the best possible recreation opportunities are made available to the public and to identify and reinforce respective roles in the recreation management of the Forest.

This policy covers continued cooperation with the State of Vermont and interested and involved groups or individuals. Included also is the common effort of working with user groups to monitor trends, demands and uses, and to evaluate and respond in a positive manner to new proposals. Working with all parties should help resolve the problems of user conflict as they arise.

DIRECTION

Converting objectives and policies into management direction is the next logical step. It also is appropriate to attempt to sort the guiding directions into a general framework, followed by a slightly more specific categorizing into three reference time frame periods, namely:

- short range or 1985-1987
- intermedicate range or 1988-1992
- longer term or 1993-2000

to provide the basic setting to further convert direction to Project Goals and Implementation Strategy.

This approach will enable the Forest to meet specific needs for planning recreation programs in a more timely fashion. It does not seem appropriate or necessary to go beyond 15-16 years projection based upon the type of changes which have occurred in the past 15-16 years.

Direction for the recreation program should respond to the changes in recreation use which have occurred over the last 15 years such as: more hiking trail use and less formal picnic ground use; more accessible highly developed campgrounds over primitive campgrounds; more snowmobile ORV and horseback riding use; etc. It is important to expand more fully on proposed direction to include aspects which were made apparent through research for this report, and again to focus upon specific Forest needs. The Green Mountain National Forest Recreation program should be guided by the following general directions:

1. Concentrate on improving the quality of Forest recreation opportunities, to meet present needs.

2. Maintain and improve existing recreation facilities to quality standards. Tie to RIM condition or limits of acceptable change concepts.

3. Make existing facilities as self-managing as possible through good site planning.

4. Encourage as few as possible restrictions or regulations on Forest recreation use.

5. Distribute recreation use through zone planning to spread user pressure more evenly over the recreation base.

6. Explore possible new recreation projects as opportunities arise to meet the needs for changing recreation uses as may be reflected by user studies, research projects, etc.

7. Provide cost effective recreation opportunities, balance fees at appropriate sites commensurate with opportunities offered to keep service versus O&M costs at a level commensurate with income.

8. Follow-up on Forest land management planning with the next level of recreation plans needed in Zone Planing. The LMP zones carry varying degrees of priority. Recreation work needs to be scheduled over the next several years.

9. The Vermont Wilderness Act directs the Forest Service to prepare management plans for each of the four new wildernesses and for the National Recreation Area. These plans will reflect LMP needs separate from the plans described in 8 above. Preparation of these plans is a high priority task.

10. Recreation site plans are needed to develop action programs for rehabilitation and maintenance work. Site planning priorities will be set based on the following criteria:

a. complete rehabilitation of existing sites as opposed to developing new ones particularly for public safety
b. public demand
c. already proposed for RO capital investment list
d. blend with regular maintenance direction
e. resource degradation occurring
f. inadequate use dictates changes

Well-planned sites require less signing. Recreation site work will be planned to handle public use with a minimum of signs regulations and controls. In preparing site plans, emphasize quality in long lasting maintenance-free development through good site design work.

11. Provide opportunity for public recreation use of Grout Pond in response to existing pressure involving potential resource damage. Plan and build a developed recreation area at the Pond within the ROS guidelines established for the area.

12. Picnic areas associated with long-time historical use or with other specific uses such as observation sites will be maintained to quality standards. All other picnic grounds will be considered for potential changes of use.

13. Respond to changes in use patterns which have occurred within the last 15 years, and predict direction for the next 15 years. Reconsider the status of presently underused sites. Convert underused areas to more appropriate uses including, if indicated, dismantling of the facility altogether. Plan reconstruction of some facilities to reflect new public use demands.

14. Focus attention on access needs, including development of trail head facilities and parking.

15. Maintain a continuing analysis of all trails and trail segments. Deal with duplicity (i.e. paralleling single use trails), poorly located routes and problem maintenance areas. Consider "mothballing" some trails or sections if not used and hard or expensive to maintain.

16. Analyze recreation opportunities at locations developed for other resource management uses such as scattered camping along Forest roads at stump dumps or other roadside openings, log landings and adjacent fields. Make the Forest more accessible for such uses.

17. Prepare vegetative management plans for National Forest adjacent to major roads and travelways, and for recreation areas. Include opportunities to develop lookoffs and observation sites and other ways to enjoy visual variety.

18. Continue to include recreation specialist assistance in other resource projects. Provide for visual management of timber sales. Projects in areas of lowest or moderate visual impact will receive recreation specialist involvement if there are special recreation attributes.

19. Emphasize the recreation values in open space such as fields and wildlife openings. Maintain and provide open space for a variety of recreation use.

20. Continue to be sensitive to the recreation aspects of gates and road closures. Analyze such actions from the recreation standpoint considering restrictions on public access and on potential scattered remote camping. Provide positive signing at gates explaining the need to close the road.

21. Give emphasis to signing programs including signs, posters and bulletin boards. Strive to make the public feel welcome with a minimum number of restrictive messages.

22. Information and interpretation programs will be re-examined to provide a more adequate and satisfactory range of materials and learning opportunities for the Forest visitor. Place emphasis on teaching.

23. Investigate the broadest possible use of the Forest for demonstration aspects. Define what management techniques are

being employed and what accomplishments are being made or are expected. Explore ways to distribute information to the public. Consider "college lab" use of the Forest for Forestry Camps, individual students and teachers.

24. The Forest should work closely with colleges and universities to develop management programs and on-going projects. Explore semester employment of students for credit, wider use of special projects for credit and interaction between professionals.

25. Cooperate with the State of Vermont in development of quality recreation facilities within the Forest boundary. Explore providing roadside recreation facilities along major roads.

26. Continue to cooperate with the state and other agencies in the reintroduction of the Atlantic Salmon to the White River. Redefine the Forest Service role, coordinating Forest management activities with the restoration program including acquisition of land or easements, access and other related aspects.

27. Work with private providers of recreation in developing opportunities available to the public to achieve a quality experience.

28. Work with towns and other local government entities in facilitating development of locally popular recreation.

29. Continue to coordinate with the Green Mountain Club and other related Trail Clubs in management and administration of the Long/Appalachian Trail system within and adjacent to the Forest.

30. Complete unit plans for the two units of the Long Trail within the Forest boundary as directed by the Long Range Management Plan for the Long Trail developed by the Green Mountain Club.

31. Emphasize acquisition of land and rights-of-way to round out the total recreation resource opportunity of the Forest.

Additional specific direction is needed to relate some aspects over the appropriate time period for the future.

Short-Range Program Development

For purposes of this report, the short-range time frame is construed to be the immediate budgeting future for 1985, 1986 and 1987. Federal government and Forest Service budget procedures virtually preclude major additions or changes for this period especially for capital investment items. However, it would still be conceivable to request and receive funding for the most pressing high priority needs.

During this period, many priority recreation planning tasks must be started in order to meet future financing needs and immediate budget concerns. Direction here is predicated upon completion of the Forest Land Management plan which is the major influence on how soon some tasks can be done and how much progress can be expected.

a. Quality maintenance schedules will be prepared for developed sites and trails, including identification of major maintenance items.

b. Site plans for the highest priority recreation sites will be completed.

c. Do Zone Plans for those LMP zones identified for resource activities in the first planning period.

d. Prepare management plans for the National Recreation area and the four Wildernesses included in the Vermont Wilderness Act.

e. Implement the Forest Sign Plan program.

f. Prepare programs for public information and interpretive services.

g. Draft vegetative management plans for priority travelways, recreation sites, utility corridors, electronic sites, etc.

h. Do a complete recreation area plan for Group Pond and vicinity.

i. Subordinate to zone plans and wilderness and NRA planning, prepare plans for trail work and trailhead development.

j. Complete Long Trail Unit Plans.

Intermediate Program Direction

Intermediate time frame is the period from 1988 through 1992 (5 years). This is the opportunity to formulate a fully integrated program, including budgetary needs and proposals developed during the preceding years.

It is also the time frame which might be most affected by ORRRC II and the 1989 RPA assessment. It should be a good period for capital investment scheduling, major repairs and top priority projects.

a. Major maintenance items identified in earlier programs will be planned and scheduled into capital investment budgets to begin receiving financing.

b. Continue with site plan work and schedule completion of all site plans.

c. Complete plans for the remainder of LMP zones.

d. Finish vegetative management plans and schedules for the remainder of the most important travelways and sites.

e. Finalize all aspects of the Grout Pond plan and schedule development activities.

f. Analyze and develop a total integrated trails network incorporating multiple use trails wherever possible.

g. Monitor the need for new developed sites at highest priority locations within the Forest, especially Chittenden and Somerset Reservoirs.

Longer-Range Program Development

This covers the period from 1993-2000. This longer-range time frame will include work identified by the planning processes which should have been essentially completed in the first two periods; this should be the period of facilitating the specific planning processes and re-evaluating activities directed by earlier plans.

This period will be tempered by ORRRC II and other national direction. It is also the opportunity to focus on a major project which may have begun formulating earlier.

a. All site planning for existing and top priority sites will be completed and approved.

b. Chittenden Reservoir, Somerset Reservoir and to some extent, Harriman Reservoir represent excellent recreation resources, and present special opportunities. Determine the need for destination type facilities at all three. Consider cooperative development aspects with the landowners, the state and the local entities.

X. FURTHER WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

Two further chapters need to be written based upon the objectives, policies and directions contained above. These chapters are:

Project Goals - this chapter will include specific tasks to meet the direction.

Implementation Strategy - this will be an action plan listing jobs to be done, when they should be done and how they will be accomplished.

The writing of these two chapters is a further expansion of the planning process, but should not be done until some of the concepts herein are approved and-or accepted. Therefore, these chapters are not a part of this current work.

It is also important for the Forest to expand the planning process into the Zone planning concept. Multi-disciplinary data from zone work will feed up through the hierarchy of plans to support and verify overall direction (or to disprove what has been done), and will round out the basis for goals, implementation and monitoring.

Other study areas include:

1. Potential hiker trail conflicts, especially for the Appalachian Trail/Long Trail, at winter sports areas. As ski areas develop

from single season use to year-round operation, impacts on trail use will increase. Corridor infringement, visual problems, signing and safety are a few of the concerns. Contrasted with that are the decided benefits for hikers to take advantage of ski area amenities.

2. The White River is a major area attraction as well as a primary spawning stream for the reintroduction of the Atlantic salmon. Future concerns include extent of recreation use and development on the river and its feeder streams.

3. Interpretation and development of cultural resource sites will be a topic for future concerns as public interest develops in this area.

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